

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE**

April 12, 2011

5:00 PM

**Mansfield Downtown Partnership office
1244 Storrs Road**

Minutes

Present: Roger Adams, Brien Buckman, Curt Hirsch, Marty Hirschorn

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guest: Howard Kaufman, LeylandAlliance; Peter Elliot and Dan Zelson, Charter Realty (all by telephone); Board of Directors member Harry Birkenruth

1. Call to Order

Curt Hirsch called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm in Steve Rogers absence.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from March 2, 2011

There was no quorum so the minutes were not approved.

4. Review Construction Logistics for current Storrs Center businesses

Committee members briefly discussed a list of draft questions that Cynthia van Zelm put together for discussion that would be pertinent to current and future Storrs Center businesses during construction.

Mr. Hirsch noted that he had sent an e-mail to Ms. van Zelm about the signage review requirements by Town staff. He said that often developers or tenants will want to have information that a business is "coming soon" but the current regulations do not allow that type of signage on site (except in a window) before a business opens.

Marty Hirschorn expressed concern about how this might affect promotion for businesses. Mr. Hirsch said that sometimes signage can list all tenants together in a group off-site. Mr. Hirsch said there is a process to appeal regulations through the Board of Appeals. Ms. van Zelm suggested that this be discussed further by Partnership and Town staff.

5. Update and Discussion of Commercial Leasing

Howard Kaufman with LeylandAlliance, and Dan Zelson and Peter Elliott with Charter Realty joined the meeting by telephone.

Mr. Zelson said that Charter is bound by confidentiality agreements in its Letters of Intent and leases with tenants.

He noted that Phase 1A is close to being tenanted with either Letters of Intent or leases being finalized. There is a good mix of local, regional and national tenants. Mr. Zelson said he is pleasantly surprised; they are ahead of schedule on their leasing.

Mr. Zelson said they hope to announce some leases soon.

Roger Adams asked why progress is ahead of schedule. Mr. Zelson said part of the reason is the economy is picking up but more importantly the demand for the Storrs Center type project is strong and they have been seeing similar interest in a college town in Maryland where they are a leasing agent.

Mr. Hirsch asked about what methods are being used to get the word out on Storrs Center. Mr. Zelson said they do an e-mail blast about Storrs Center to regional and national retailers and brokers. Charter has also issued some press releases and attended some trade shows.

Mr. Elliott has also compiled an extensive list of projects in similar college towns that may fit in Mansfield.

Mr. Zelson said the Partnership has also provided leads that Charter has pursued.

Mr. Zelson noted that the most important advertising will be to get the project in the ground.

Cynthia van Zelm asked what the Committee can do to help. Mr. Elliott suggested that Committee members continue to forward leads to Charter. Residents know the town best. Mr. Zelson echoed the fact that the input through the Partnership is the best way to get prospects.

Mr. Hirschorn asked how the mix of tenants is determined. He expressed concerns in the past about the summer season when there are much fewer residents. He said that people often have to travel far to find a "destination" restaurant.

Mr. Zelson said a lot is determined by the marketplace. They are not trying to create an area of only one price point with respect to restaurants, etc.

Harry Birkenruth asked about how the proposed rental rates compare with other areas. Are tenants feeling comfortable with the proposed rates? Mr. Zelson said that rent has typically not been an issue in the discussions. He said the rents would be less than West Hartford. Mr. Kaufman said he expected that rents would be at the upper end of the Storrs market and noted that Leyland would not want to price itself out of the market. Mr. Elliott said he thought rents were comparable to rents surrounding Syracuse University.

Mr. Hirschorn asked if there was a target with respect to local vs. regional vs. national tenants. Mr. Elliott said that Charter is not looking at any big box tenants. He said they are hoping to bring in the best tenant regardless of whether they fit into a category. Mr. Zelson said Charter evaluates what each business brings to the mix and how do they fit in with the other tenants.

Mr. Kaufman said that Charter presents offers to Leyland and Leyland makes the decision about whether a particular tenant should be pursued, but they are relying on Charter's long-term professional experience.

Mr. Zelson said that Charter will work with the Partnership in terms of announcing leases when they are ready - through press releases.

Mr. Kaufman, Mr. Zelson, and Mr. Elliott ended their call.

Brien Buckman said it will be important to reach out to businesses who have signed leases to ascertain how the Committee can help them succeed. He related his comment back to the construction related questions.

6. Future Meetings

Mr. Hirsch suggested that Committee members forward on comments on the construction questions to Ms. van Zelm and that the discussion continue at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed that a next meeting date could be deferred.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.